

ART. VIII.—*Three rare Species of Eggs hitherto only
described from the Oviduct of the Bird.*

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(Communicated by Professor W. BALDWIN SPENCER, M.A.)

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1. SERICULUS MELINUS, Latham (Regent-bird).

Locality.—Somewhat restricted, being chiefly confined to the sub-tropical coastal scrubs of the Northern portion of New South Wales and Southern Queensland; but its extreme limit appears to be Port Jackson in the South, where the bird has been occasionally observed, and the Fitzroy River in the North. I have recorded having received a skin of a young male from Duaringa, near that River.

Observations.—The Regent-bird, especially the adult male with glorious black and yellow plumage, Gould has well said is one of the finest of Australian Fauna. Last November I undertook an excursion to the Richmond River District, New South Wales, with a view of obtaining, amongst other items, the eggs of the Regent-bird. I found the luxuriant scrubs abounding with Regent-birds, in fact, they were as plentiful there as the Wattle-birds about the Banksia groves of our Southern coast. We experienced no difficulty in procuring our few specimen skins. All that was necessary was to select a balmy day and recline under a Canthium tree, where the birds (males in various stages of plumage and females) came to regale themselves on the bunches of hard yellow berries. Nevertheless, although well aided with a hardy companion, I prosecuted a vigorous and toilsome search through dense labyrinths of hot scrub and thorny brakes of prodigal growth, where the thick foliage of the trees caused a perpetual twilight underneath, but returned without the eggs. It was an experience akin to seeking for the proverbial needle in a haystack. From evidence gained by dissection

and otherwise, it appears that November was too early for the majority of the birds. However, just prior to leaving (19th November) we detected a female carrying a stick, and after much laborious work we succeeded in tracing her through an entanglement of wild raspberries and stinging trees, and were satisfied that she was building in a certain bushy Buoyong (*Tarrielia*) tree, after seeing her return several times, each time with a twig in her bill. Marking the tree, we pointed it out to two young farmers, directing them to send the eggs after us. Some weeks afterwards, I received a doleful letter stating they were unable to climb the tree. However, the next month another farmer, whose scrub paddock I had scoured, following up my instructions, found therein a Regent's nest containing a pair of fresh eggs, which I now have pleasure in describing.

The Eggs.—(a) A beautiful, well-shaped specimen, with a fine texture of shell of a light yellowish-stone colour, with a faint greenish tinge, and marked with blotches and spots of sienna, but principally with hair-like markings of the same colour in fanciful shapes and figures, as if a person had painted them on with a fine brush. Intermingled are a few greyish streaks, dull, as if under the shell's surface. All the markings are fairly distributed, but are more abundant around the upper quarter of the egg. The dimensions are 4 cm. long by a breadth of 2.8 cm., somewhat large compared with the size of the parent. The character of the markings resemble much the egg of its close ally, the Spotted Bowerbird (*Chlamydodera maculata*), which I found near Wentworth, River Darling, October 1887, with the difference that the ground colour of the Regent is more yellowish and not of the greenish shade of the Bower-bird. (b) Similar to the other specimen, but markings less pronounced and finer in character, with a greater proportion of the dull greyish hair-like streaks, also a little smaller; length 3.95 cm. by a breadth of 2.75 cm.

The Nest.—It was discovered during the last week in December, was placed about 15 feet from the ground, and was observed by the bird sitting thereon. The structure was of such a loose nature—merely a few twigs forming a flat shelf about five inches across—that it fell to pieces on removal from the tree. It was accounted remarkable how the eggs could retain their position in it. The description of the nest verifies the statement found in Gould, that “it is rudely constructed of sticks; no other material being

employed, not even a few roots as a lining," but is at variance with Mr. North's statement, which precedes his description of the egg taken from the oviduct of a bird by Mr. Cockerell, the collector, the only other egg at present known.

Incidentally, the streaky markings of the eggs open up a speculation in reference to coloration. A clever paper read before this Society some time ago, suggested the bowers or play houses of the birds as attributive to the cause. Perhaps Mr. Lucas had in his mind Jacob and the flocks that conceived before the rods and brought forth cattle, "ringstreaked, speckled, and spotted." But all bower-building birds do not lay streaky-coloured eggs, to wit, the Satin Bower-bird (*Ptilonorhynchus*). I succeeded in taking a good photograph of the Regent-bird's bower.

2. SCYTHROPS NOV.E-HOLLANDLE, Latham (Channel-bill)

Locality.—This bird is a wanderer over the whole of Australia, but has not yet been received from the South West portion, and sometimes reaches Tasmania. Is recorded from New Guinea.

Observations.—Th. Channel-bill is manifestly interesting, because it is the largest of Australian Cuckoos. It is sometimes known inland as the "flood" bird, arriving with such occurrences. Gould described an egg from the oviduct. Mr. North described a similar immature egg from a bird shot on the Macleay River during the first week in November 1884. An egg collected for me (taken from a crow's nest, if I recollect rightly) at Cooper's Creek, was unfortunately broken in transit.

The Egg.—A mature example, in the possession of Mr. D. Le Souëf, Zoological Gardens, Melbourne, may be described as light buff or pinkish-brown in colour, mediumly spotted with pinkish-red and chestnut, with a number of light purplish markings under the shell's surface. In shape and in general coloration, it is not unlike a Strepera's (Crow-shrike) small egg. Texture of shell a little coarse; surface almost lustreless; length 4.2 cm. by a breadth of 2.84 cm. The egg was taken in October 1880, near Inglewood, Queensland, where the Channel-bills were fairly numerous, by Mr. Herman Lau, an observing naturalist, and, as remarkable as it may appear, from the nest of the Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter*), together with an egg of the bird of prey.

On another occasion, Mr. Lau took a pair of Channel-bill's eggs, together with a pair of the common magpie's (*Gymnorhina tibicen*), all fresh from the nest of the latter; while the previous season he took a pair of young Channel-bills from a Strepera's nest, and forwarded them to the Queensland Museum. It would be interesting indeed to learn if the same Channel-bill deposit two eggs in the foster bird's nest, or were they laid by separate birds.

3. LOPHOLAIMUS ANTARTICUS, Shaw (Topknot Pigeon).

Locality.—The coastal scrub generally from Cape York to Gippsland Lakes. Occasional stragglers reach Tasmania. This handsome bird is persistently omitted from the Victorian list, notwithstanding it has been recorded from Eastern Gippsland, and I possess a note of a flock having appeared at Tyrell Creek, near Charlton, November 1889.

Observations.—I enjoyed ample opportunity of observing these pigeons at home in the Richmond River scrub last November, but was much too early for their breeding season. It was delightful as the rising sun was gilding the tops of the taller trees of the scrub to steal along the leafy avenues to some favoured native Tamarind tree (*Diploglottis*), there to watch the Topknot Pigeons, in company with the gorgeously dressed Magnificent and Swainson's Fruit Pigeons, ravishing the agreeable acrid bunches of fruit. The flight of the Topknot Pigeon is rapid and powerful. At times they congregate in large numbers, hence they are sometimes called "flock" pigeons by the dwellers of the scrub. The egg I am permitted to describe is in the collection of Mr. Le Souëf. It was taken from the nest at the end of January 1887, by Mr. Herman Lau, Vandilla, Queensland. Incubation was about a week old, therefore it is probable that this species lays one egg only.

The Egg.—Is dull white, somewhat granulated. In shape, inclined to oval, with peculiarly pointed extremities, especially the smaller end which nips off suddenly. Length 4.5 cm. by a breadth of 3.09 cm.

The Nest.—The bird was shot, not knowing it flew from the nest, which was immediately discovered about forty feet from the ground on a thick branch of a Eucalypt, near the outskirts of the Bunya Mountain scrub. Like those of the majority of pigeons, the nest was of the usual scanty nature of coarse sticks, a few finer inside.